

# The particle <<otan>>: some specificities of temporal localisation.

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## ABSTRACT

L'objectif de ce travail est l'étude de la particule temporelle "otan" du grec moderne. Le marqueur présente une variété d'emplois, et de valeurs, qui rendent difficile une définition globale et homogène. "Otan", relie, en effet, deux propositions en établissant une relation d'interdépendance qui se manifeste sur le plan syntaxique, sur le plan énonciatif et sur le plan temporel. Or, la localisation temporelle n'est pas opérée de façon identique dans tous les cas. Notre analyse est basée sur la théorie des opérations énonciatives d'A. Culioli et notre but est la définition d'une valeur fondamentale prenant en compte la diversité contextuelle attestée.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to explore the uses of the temporal particle <<otan>> in order to define its fundamental value from which the others are derived. The analysis is data oriented and based on the theory of enunciative operations elaborated by A. Culioli (1982, 1990).

## 2. TRADITIONAL APPROCHES AND SYNTACTIC REALITY

Indisputably <<otan>> is a linguistic item used very often in the speech, therefore its syntactic definition remains ambiguous and non homogeneous. Characteristically, in Tzartanos' grammar (1946:96) referring

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1 The mentioned examples are collected from the novel of M. Limberaki "The trees" (Athens: Kedros), newspapers ("Eleftherotypia" and "To Vima" of 17/7/94 and 19/2/95) and a scientific book (D. Karakitsos "Microsoft Access", Athens: ANUBIS).

to the particle's function we find only an one-sentence, quite vague definition ("particle which determines temporarily another sentence"). Traditional grammars, in fact, focus their analysis on the different mood types of the subordinate temporal clauses.

However, though << otan >> establishes an interdependence between the clauses which it relates, its due importance is not given to the created relation. In fact, this relation appears:

a. in the syntactic plan because of a modification of their syntactic status: the clauses are related in a subordinating scheme.

1. To plio efyge, i mitera evale ta klamata.  
The ship sailed, mother burst into tears.

2. Otan to plio efyge, i mitera evale ta klamata.  
When the ship sailed, mother burst into tears.

b. in the enunciative plan because it establishes a locating operation relative to the system of the enunciative coordinates. So in the following example:

3. Otan ide to Gianni harike para poly.  
When he met Yannis he was very glad

the process denoted by "harike" has as locator the process "ide" which is introduced by "otan".

c. finally the interdependence relation appears in the temporal plan, because it installs the chronological evolution of the speech act. We can compare the following utterance (4a):

4a. Mpike sto domatio. To tilefono ktypise.  
He entered the room. The telephone rang.

where the two processes are in a consecutiveness relation, with 4b

4b. Otan mpike sto domatio, to tilefono ktypise.

When he entered the room, he heard the telephone rang.

in which the same processes are presented after the insertion of the particle and we can observe that now they are presented simultaneously.

At the same time, little attention has been also paid to the way in which << otan >> determines temporarily a process in the speech. Consider the following:

5. Otan se syllogizome to ema mou pagoni.  
When I'm thinking about you, my blood freezes

6. Otan to pnevma kimate to soma trefete.  
When the spirit is sleeping, the body is nourished.
7. Otan ide to Gianni harike para poly.  
When he met Yannis he was very glad.

It can be noticed that the temporal localisation of the state, or the event, which is denoted by the clausal verb in the above utterances, is not assumed in a similar way in all cases. The question which arises is whether behind the existing different types of the localising operation there is an abstract metalinguistic operation compatible with all its multiple manifestations performed by the particle.

To define the operation of which "otan" is the trace, I propose a study of the values associated with the particle taking into account the interaction of parameters such as the different kinds of processes and the verb's tense and lexical aspect involved.

Before proceeding with the analysis it seems reasonable to refer to some basic characteristics of Culicoli's framework, concerning the operation of location:

- I. the relationship of location is always binary,
- II. "when, within a referential system, a term x is located relative to a term y, the operation attributes a referential value to x (determines a property of x) which it did not have before" (Culicoli 1990:74).

### 3. TEMPORAL DETERMINATION

If we consider P the process of the subordinate clause that includes "otan" and Q the process of the main clause, we can have the scheme "Otan P, Q" or "Q, otan P" and two major classes of use can be distinguished:

- a. the process P is determinate only relative to Q:
  8. Otan itan mikri ithele na gini astronomos.  
When she was young she wanted to be an astronomer.
  9. Otan pini ginete anypoforos  
When he drinks he becomes unbearable
- b. the process P is determinate independently of its relation to Q:
  10. Otan o Gianni paraponethike, o proustamenos ton apopire.  
When Yannis complained, his superior told him off.
  11. Otan efyge gia spoudes sto Parisi i mitera tou egkatastat.hike sto exohiko mas.

When he left to study in Paris, his mother came to live in our country house.

Let us study the two different classes.

3.1. The process P is determinate only relative to Q.

In this case P and Q have a temporal status only through their common localisation. The temporal definition of P is not autonomous but in relation to Q's localisation. As the process P is determined only by its localisation in points created by "otan", which in parallel are localisators of Q, the created occurrence of P is not situated relative to the enunciative coordinates. Consequently, the event denoted by the verb is not validated through a particular enunciative instance but in every possible situation.

The verbs of the two clauses are in enestotas and this has a double consequence: the utterance attempts a generic value and in some cases a causality relation is also established. Here are some examples:

12. Otan perptai poli kourazete.

When he walks a lot he gets tired

13. Otan ekteleite epilektiki erotisi, to apotelesma provallete se morfi fyllou dedomenon.

When a selected question is executed, the result is shown as a spreadsheet.

What is conveyed here, is that enestotas doesn't mark a particular enunciative event. Therefore, it is signalled that the use of enestotas in the previous examples is not the same as in a narration:

14. Otan epitelous fthano spiti, antilamvanom ai pos xehasa ta klidia mou.

When finally I arrive at home, I realise that I forgot my keys.

In 14 "fthano" is located independantly from the fact that "otan" is the locator of "antilamvanomai". Consequently, the "arrival" here is preconstraual. The localisation of "fthano", carried out through its attachement to Q, is independent from its predication of existence.

Next, we will refer to utterances in enestotas, with a generic and a causal value.

### 3.1.1 Generic and iterative value

It is known that an utterance with generic value can be validated for any occurrence of situation and is not determined in the temporal plan. Let us consider again some utterances which we have already mentioned:

15. Otan pini ginete anypoforos

When he drinks he becomes unbearable

16. Otan to pnevma koimate to soma trefete.

When the spirit is sleeping, the body is nourished.

"Otan P, Q" marks that no temporal point determined as locator of P, is distinguishable as locator of Q. Enestotas doesn't permit the construction of a class of temporal points, noted t, so the utterances define an absolute truth.

It must be noticed also that this kind of inter-propositional relations imply that the process, which "otán" introduces, is semantically compatible with a repetition. Consequently, utterances as the following:

17a. \*Otan eine neos, hani ton kero tou

When he is young he wastes his time

are not grammatical, because the verb's semantics (einaí neos) provoke its attachment to the enunciative coordinates, so its actualisation.

On the contrary,

17b. Otan kapios eine neos, hani ton kero tou.

When someone is young he wastes his time.

is acceptable because "kapios" is not identified at any particular reference.

Genericity is also declared when the tense of the subordinate clause is paratattikos. It is shown (Grammenidis 1992:110), that paratattikos, though it can't specify a temporal point "t" linked with a unique enunciative origine, differentiates it from the situation of enunciation. As a consequence utterances like 18, 19:

18. Otan itan mikri ithele na gini astronomos.

When she was young she wanted to be an astronomer.

19. Otan isan i Tourki edo, polemousame me tous Ellines.

When the Turks were here, we fought along with the Greeks.

are grammatical. "Otan" establishes a kind of break in relation to the situation of enunciation. In this way, "Otan itan mikri ithele na gini astronomos" infers the conclusion that "she is not young now". "Otan" means here "for

every occurrence of <itan mikri>('she was young') and it takes the value of "kata ti diärkeia tis periodou pou..." (during the periode that...).

The notion of iteration, on the contrary, declares the creation of several occurrences of the process (we can have a unique or different occurrences, and not always the same as in the case of the generic value). The following examples demonstrate the case:

20. Otan kalite na apantisi se eroisis epi exoterikis politikis eine idietera prosektikos.  
When he is asked questions regarding foreign policy he is particularly careful.

21. Otan rotas ta perissotera stelehi tou PASOK gia ti metapandreiki epohi (...) apantoun epithetika.  
When you ask most of PASOK's cadres about the post-pandreou era (...) they respond aggressively.

"Otan" confers here aoristic properties on "kalite" and "rotas" without locating them in a particular situation. So, for every possible occurrence of the above verbs, the main clause's predicates are validated.

Consequently, an operation of scanning, which, according to Culioli (1990:182) consists in running over the whole notional domain, without being willing or able to pick out one or more distinguished value(s), is noticed here. "Otan" can be substituted by "kathe fora pou" and an occurrence as 21 means that for every temporal point t locating P, there is localisation of Q. However, as Zeitoun (1993:106) writes for "when" in english, "otan" "is not a scanning marker in itself (...) it is his aoristic properties that render it compatible with a scanning". Before moving to the next case, it must be noticed that some times an adverbial locution marks explicitly the iteration:

22. Polles fores, otan to xoma eine skliro i to edafos tsimentarismeno, hrisimopieite kai i kimolia  
Often when the ground is hard or covered with cement, chalk is used.

### 3.1.2. Causality relation between P and Q.

All mentioned uses of enestotas, bring out an inference relation between P and Q. This relation is created because Q is defined through the localisation of Q. In fact we can't have P without Q. Additionally, the inference relation some times can be equivalent with a consequentiveness relation. This relation results from the semantic properties of P and Q and not

from enestotas which, as already said, is not able to structure the class of temporal points'. Two cases can be recorded:

(i) *Q is derived by P*

so we have a kind of consecutiveness and Q has an aortic value. Here are some examples:

23. Otan fygete apo ti diadikasia erotoapokrisis, to synolo ton dynamikon apotelesmaton katastrefete.  
When you exit the questions-answer procedure, the total of the dynamic results is destroyed

24. Otan ektelite epilektiki erotisi, to apotelesma provallate se morfi fyllo dedomenon.  
When a selected question is executed, the result is shown as a spreadsheet.

(ii) *P goes hand in hand with Q.*

In this case we have utterances as the following:

25. Otan ine mesimeri sto Parisi, ine brady sti Bostoni.  
When it is mid-day in Paris, it is night in Boston.

The two example cases result from the interpositional relation which is established between P and Q, that is from the fact that P's localisation entails the one of Q.

Therefore, an utterance as 26

26. "Otan pini ehi kefi"

When he drinks he becomes joyfull.

is compatible with both values. In fact, this utterance can mean "to pote toy ftiahnei ti diathesi" (the drink makes him mood), but also "to gegonos oti pini ine endixi oti exi kali diathesi" (the fact that he is drinking shows that his is in a good mood). In the second case, Q doesn't have an aortic value but there is a simple simultaneity between the two processes. The utterance attends a value close to "exi kefi panta otan pini" (he is always in a good mood when he drinks).

This example exhibits the difference between "otan" and "kathe fora pou" (every time that). Contrary to "otan", "kathe fora pou" is able not only to distinguish but also to define locators, so it necessarily entails an aortic value to Q. Here are some examples:

27. Kathe fora pou pini, tragouda.  
Each time he drinks, he sings.

28. *Kathe fora pou pai se panti argi na gyrisi spiti.*  
Each time he goes to a party he returns late at home.

For one more time, it is verified that *enestotas* as it cannot form a class of locators, it cannot be associated with different values of notional function. Therefore, utterances introduced by "otan" are compatible with "panta" (always) but not those introduced by "kathe fora pou".

### 3.2. P is constructed independently of Q.

In this case the process P is not auto-located but it is constructed independently of its attachment to Q. "Otan" locates P but the process's localisation is getting normalised only because Q is also related to the enunciative coordinates. In consequence P and Q must be in aoristos. Let us examine the following examples:

29. *Otan to teliosa anakalypsa oti iha fuaxi tin arhi enos mythistorimatos.*

When I finished it I realised that I had written the beginning of a novel.

30. *Otan ide to spiti tis isihase.*

When she saw her house she relaxed.

In 30 "Otan to teliosa" supposes explicitly or implicitly, that the process is already mentioned somewhere: it is already localised relatively to the instance of enunciation. "Otan" doesn't specify "teliosa", like in the previous cases, but it constitutes its distinguished locator, which in the same time locates "anakalypsa".

When the process Q is in aoristos, it confers on "Otan R" the same status as an adverbial locator in initial position. Consequently, "i Maria efyge" in the utterance "Otan o Giannis irthe i Maria efyge" (when Yiannis arrived, Maria left) has the same characteristics with the following one:

31. *"Stis 8, i Maria efyge".*

At 8 o'clock Maria left.

What is conveyed here, is that the preconstruction of P permits its stabilized attachment in a given temporal point.

As "otan" has aoristic properties it cannot situate the denoted process on the temporal axe. Accordingly, the utterance "otan eide to spiti isihase" declares:



(i) that P is preconstituted and its localisation is situated in respect to the instance of enunciation.

(ii) the concomitance between P and Q in a determined temporal point. "Otan" takes a value close to "ti stigmati pou" (the moment that).

The construction of Q in aoristos excludes the aortic value. In fact the relation of consecutiveness is created because one of the two processes is previous to the other.

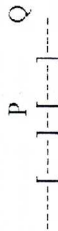
"Otan" delimits the two processes. If we adopt a topological representation of the different kinds of processes based on the existence or the absence of boundaries marking their beginning and their end, we can conclude that in this case the first process is envisaged as accomplished and the second as just beginning. However two subclasses can be distinguished:

In the first one we have utterances as in the examples 29 and 32:

32. Otan teliosa to vivlio, piga to hirografo se  
tesseris ekdotikoys oikoy ke oli to aperripsan.

When I finished the book, I presented the manuscript to  
four editors but all rejected it.

Here, an interval between the two processes' boundaries exists: we have a real consecutiveness. The utterances are constructed such that, according to the extra-linguistic knowledge of the spatio-temporal universe's organisation, they can be interpreted as if it were a lapse of time between the two processes. The following figure can help to represent the case:



In the second case the difference between the two processes is nearly limited to a concomitance as in 33 and 34:

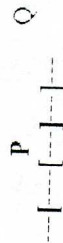
33. Kati xeskistike mesa tis otan ton afise orthio  
stin akti.

Something was teared to pieces within her, when she left  
him standing at the coast.

34. Otan kata to mesimeri eftase sto mikro estiatorio, vrike  
mazementi oli tin pareia.

When she arrived, about mid-day, in the little restaurant, she  
found all her friends assembled.

The two processes can be presented in the following schematic way:



#### 4. CONCLUSION

The discussion on "otan" can be summarised as follows: Behind the existing different types of uses there is an abstract operation compatible with all its multiple manifestations performed by the particle. "Otan" distinguishes, in fact, one or more temporal points as locators of a process P in order to licence them as locator(s) of a process Q.

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